

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15
NSCE-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 SSM-05 IO-14 ACDA-12
TRSE-00 OMB-01 /087 W
-----089383 021723Z /45

O 021523Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1621
USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 2866

DEPT FOR NEA; USIA FOR INA

E. O. 11652: NA

TAGS: OVIP (ATHERTON, ALFRED L)

SUBJ: REMARKS TO PRESS BY ATHERTON AND BEGIN AFTER MEETING
AT PM'S OFFICE THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 1978 - JERUSALEM

1. FOLLOWING ARE REMARKS TO THE PRESS BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY
ATHERTON AND PM BEGIN AFTER MEETING AT PM'S OFFICE IN
JERUSALEM ON THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 1978:

2. Q: COULD YOU SUM UP YOUR TALKS SIR?

3. A: I'M VERY GRATEFUL TO THE PM FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY
TO REPORT TO HIM ON MY LATEST TALKS IN CAIRO INCLUDING OUR
DISCUSSIONS OF THE LATEST NEGOTIATIONS ON THE DRAFT DECLARA-
TION OF PRINCIPLES FOR A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. IN ADDI-
TION, I HAVE BROUGHT TO THE PM A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM PRES
SADAT WHICH I CONVEYED IN OUR MEETING THIS MORNING.

4. Q: HAVE THERE BEEN ANY CHANGES, SIR? HAVE THERE BEEN ANY
CHANGES IN THE EGYPTIAN POSITION?

5. A: I CONVEYED IN THIS LAST MEETING THE LATEST ISRAELI
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SUGGESTIONS. WE DISCUSSED THEM IN CAIRO, THE EGYPTIANS ARE
CONSIDERING THEM, AND I'M AWAITING THEIR FORMAL REACTION
WHICH THEY DID NOT HAVE TIME TO GIVE ME BEFORE I LEFT.

6. Q: CAN YOU REPORT ON ANY BREAKTHROUGH IN THE NEGOTIATIONS?

7. A: I'M NOT GOING TO CHARACTERIZE EVERY STOP OF THE
NEGOTIATIONS, AS I'VE SAID BEFORE.

8. Q: WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOU MEETING THIS AFTERNOON WITH

ISRAEL'S LEGAL ADVISOR?

9. A: WELL, IT'S TO GET INTO SOME OF THE MORE TECHNICAL DETAILS THAT HAVE TO BE DISCUSSED WHEN ONE IS BEGINNING TO DEAL WITH TEXTS.

10. Q: DOES THAT INDICATE PROGRESS?

11. A: I THINK AS I'VE SAID BEFORE THAT WE'RE ENGAGED IN SERIOUS WORK, A SERIOUS DETERMINATION ON THE PART OF ALL TO MAKE PROGRESS AND THAT'S THE IMPORTANT THING.

12. PM BEGIN: BE KIND TO THE ASST SEC'Y AND ASK ME A QUESTION.

13. ATHERTON: THANK YOU, MR PRIME MINISTER.

14. BEGIN: ASSISTANT SECRETARY, MR ATHERTON, CAME AGAIN TO US AS A MOST WELCOME GUEST AND BROUGHT US REMARKS BY THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT CONCERNING THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES. HIS EFFORTS WILL CONTINUE. WE ARE GRATEFUL TO MR ATHERTON FOR ALL THE WORK HE HAS ALREADY DONE AND WILL DO IN THE FUTURE IN THIS VERY IMPORTANT PEACE MAKING PROCESS.

I CAN ONLY SAY THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS WILL GO ON WITH THE HELP OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY, MR ATHERTON. HE BROUGHT ME ALSO A PERSONAL LETTER FROM PRESIDENT SADAT. NOW WE BOTH PUBLISHED THE FACT THAT SUCH A MESSAGE WAS SENT AND RECEIVED. I ACKNOWLEDGE ITS RECEIPT GRATEFULLY. I WILL REPLY EARLY NEXT WEEK SO THAT THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY WILL BE ABLE DURING HIS STAY IN CAIRO TO DELIVER MY REPLY TO PRES SADAT. YOU WILL UNDERSTAND THAT THE CONTENTS OF THE MESSAGE MUST BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL. I AM SORRY THAT THIS LATEST STATEMENT WILL EVEN MAKE STRONGER UNCLASSIFIED

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THE CURIOSITY OF OUR FRIENDS OF THE PRESS, BUT I CANT HELP IT. SO THE CONTENTS OF THE LETTER WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL. YOU ARE AUTHORIZED TO PUBLISH THE FACT THAT SUCH A MESSAGE HAS BEEN RECEIVED.

15. Q: ARE YOU ENCOURAGED BY THE LETTER FROM PRESIDENT SADAT, MR PRIME MINISTER?

16. A: I'M ALWAYS ENCOURAGED BY MESSAGES FROM PRESIDENT SADAT, INDEED.

17. Q: DOES IT CONTAIN PROPOSALS OF ANY KIND? CAN YOU TELL US THAT MUCH?

18. A: IF YOU GO ON ASKING SUCH QUESTIONS, MY COMMITMENT NOT TO REVEAL OR DIVULGE THE CONTENTS MAY BE AT A CERTAIN POINT WEAKENED. I WOULDNT LIKE TO HAVE IT WEAKENED.

19. Q: DID YOU TALK TO PRESIDENT SADAT ABOUT EHG GOVERNMENT'S DECISION ON SUNDAY ON THE QUESTION OF SETTLEMENTS?

20. BEGIN: YES, PRESIDENT SADAT KNOWS THE DECISION.

21. (UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION FROM HEBREW FOLLOWS)

22. Q: MR PRIME MINISTER, THIS MORNING IT WAS PUBLICIZED THAT MR ATHERTON DID NOT BRING ANY NEW PROPOSALS. IN SPITE OF THIS, DID ANYTHING NEW COME UP IN YOUR MEETING THIS MORNING?

23. BEGIN: THE NEWS IS NOT CORRECT. THERE IS A BASIS FOR A CONTINUATION OF THE NEGOTIATIONS.

24. (END UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION FROM HEBREW)

25. Q: ARE YOU CONSIDERING ANOTHER MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SADAT?

26. BEGIN: IT'S NOT EXCLUDED AT ALL. YOU KNOW WE MET TWICE. NOW THERE WILL BE AN EXCHANGE OF LETTERS. IF BOTH SIDES ARE WILLING OF COURSE, WHY SHOULDNT THERE BE ANOTHER MEETING. SURELY IF PRESIDENT SADAT SHOULD INVITE ME, I WILL RESPOND POSITIVELY.

27. Q: HAS THERE BEEN A FREEZE PUT ON THE BUILDING OF ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE SINAI AND OTHER AREAS TAKEN IN THE 1967 WAR? LIKE THE KADESH BARNEA AREA WHICH WAS APPROVED FOR SETTLEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT, BUT NOW THE DEFENSE MINISTER HAS GIVEN....

28. BEGIN: THERE IS A DECISION OF THE CABINET AND WE SHALL FULFILL THE DECISION.

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DEPT FOR NEA; USIA FOR INA

QCCV Q: THAT MEANS A FREEZE ON SETTLEMENTS?

30. BEGIN: NO, IT MEANS WHAT THE DECISION MEANS.

31. (BEGIN UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION FROM HEBREW)

32. Q: IS THE DEFENSE MINISTER'S ACTION IN KEEPING WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION REGARDING KADESH BARNEA?

33. BEGIN: HERE YOU MUST ASK THE RESPECTIVE MINISTERS THEMSELVES, BUT THERE WAS A DISCUSSION ON THIS ISSUE, AND I CAN TELL YOU THAT EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT. I THINK THAT THE LAST STATEMENT WAS VERY CLEAR. EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT.

34. Q: (ASKING FOR EARLIER STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE LETTER FROM PRESIDENT SADAT TO BE REPEATED IN HEBREW.)

35. BEGIN: ASSISTANT SECRETARY RETURNED FROM CAIRO. HE PASSED ON TO THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT OUR PROPOSALS REGARDING THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, AND HE RECEIVED FROM THE EGYPTIANS THEIR REMARKS. ACCORDING TO THESE EXCHANGES, THERE IS A BASIS ON WHICH TO SAY THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES WILL CONTINUE. MR. ATHERTON, TO WHOM WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL FOR ALL HIS EFFORTS IN THIS PROCESS TO BRING PEACE TO THE MIDDLE EAST,
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BROUGHT ME TODAY A PERSONAL LETTER FROM SADAT. I WILL RESPOND TO THIS LETTER EARLY NEXT WEEK, SO THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO TAKE IT, ACCORDING TO MY CALCULATIONS, ON TUESDAY TO PASS IT ON PERSONALLY TO PRESIDENT SADAT. WE PUBLICLY ANNOUNCE THE RECEIPT OF THIS PERSONAL LETTER, AND ITS RECEIPT I GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE. BUT WE HAVE AGREED THAT THE SUBSTANCE OF THE LETTER WILL NOT BE PUBLICIZED. I SO I ASK YOUR PARDON, THAT WE WILL NOT BE MAKING PUBLIC THE SUBSTANCE OF PRESIDENT SADAT'S LETTER.

36. Q: IF NOT THE SUBSTANCE, CAN YOU GIVE US THE SPIRIT OF THE LETTER? WAS IT IN GOOD SPIRIT?

37. BEGIN: YES,BUT FIRST I HAVE TO READ THE LETTER CAREFULLY, TO ANSWER IT, AND IF IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO TELL YOU SOMETHING ABOUT THE SPIRIT, I WILL DO THAT. THESE QUESTIONS ARE ACTUALLY NOT CLARIFYING ANYTHING. IF I COULD TELL YOU WHAT'S IN THE LETTER THEN YOU COULD DRAW YOUR OWN CONCLUSIONS. BECAUSE I AM OBLIGATED NOT TO DIVULGE THE CONTENTS OF THE LETTER, THIS ANNOUNCEMENT WILL BE ENOUGH, AND WE WON'T ANSWER ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS, EVEN IF THEY ARE VERY CLEVER AND SOPHISTICATED AND ROUND-ABOUT, REGARDING THE SUBSTANCE OF THE LETTER.

38. Q: IS THIS YOUR FIRST PERSONAL CONTACT WITH PERSIDENT SADAT AFTER YOUR MEETING AT ISMAILIA?

39. BEGIN: IT'S POSSIBLE TO SAY SO. ANYWAY SINCE THE MEETING IN ISMAILIA WE HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH, WE BOTH GAVE SPEECHES IN DIFFERENT PLACES AND ON DIFFERENT OCCASIONS, BUT THIS IS THE FIRST PERSONAL CONTACT SINCE THAT VERY GOOD AND FRIENDLY MEETING WE HAD IN ISMAILIA BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT OF EGYPT AND MYSELF.

40. Q: DO YOU SEE IN THIS PERSONAL MESSAGE ANY BREAKTROUGH IN THE NEGOTIATIONS?

41. BEGIN: IT'S POSSIBLE TO SAY THAT IT IS POSITIVE THAT PRESIDENT SADAT WROTE TO ME, AND I'LL WRITE TO HIM AND THERE IS A BASIS TO ASSUME THAT THERE WILL BE A CONTINUATION OF THE PERSONAL CONTACT. IN ANY CASE PERSONAL CONTACT IS VERY

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IMPORTANT.

42. (END OF UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION)

43. Q: ARE YOU SENDING A MESSAGE TO KING HUSSEIN THROUGH MR. ATHERTON?

44. BEGIN: NO, I HAVE NO SUCH INTENTIONS, FOR THE TIME BEING.

45. Q: AFTER THIS LATEST PEACE SHUTTLE, WHAT ARE THE CHANCES NOW FOR THE RESUMPTION OF THE PEACE TALKS? MR. ATHERTON, ARE YOU ANY CLOSER TO A RESUMPTION OF THE POLITICAL TALKS?

46. ATHERTON: THIS IS OBVIOUSLY THE OBJECTIVE, TO ACHIEVE A DECLARATION, TO ACHIEVE THE RECONVENING OF THE MORE DIRECT TALKS OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE, AND TO ACHIEVE A BROADENING OF THE NEGOTIATIONS. IF I WERE TO TRY TO SAY AFTER EACH MEETING WHETHER WE'RE CLOSER OR FURTHER AWAY WE WOULD GET INTO A MATHEMATICAL MEASURING OF THESE THINGS, AND I JUST DON'T THINK THAT'S USEFUL.

47. Q: WOULD THE RESUMPTION OF THE POLITICAL TALKS HINGE ON AN AGREEMENT OF A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES? ONCE YOU HAVE THAT, DO YOU AUTOMATICALLY HAVE THE POLITICAL TALKS?

48. ATHERTON: FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW THAT IS CERTAINLY NOT THE CASE, AND I CANNOT REALLY SPEAK FOR THE OTHER GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED, FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF EGYPT, FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL. THEY WILL HAVE TO SPEAK TO THAT QUESTION, I'M AFRAID.

49. Q: SO YOU'RE SAYING THAT EVEN IF YOU DO GET AN AGREEMENT ON A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES THAT DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN A RESUMPTION OF THE POLITICAL TALKS.

50. ATHERTON: I JUST DON'T WANT TO SPECULATE THAT FAR INTO THE FUTURE, I REALLY DON'T.

51. (UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION FROM HEBREW):

52. Q: I'M AFRAID I REALLY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND AND I MUST REPEAT ONE QUESTION. IS THE STEP OF THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE LAST NIGHT, REGARDING THE SETTLEMENT AT KADESH BARNEA IN ACCORD WITH THE DECISION OF THE GOVERNMENT?

53. BEGIN: I ALREADY ANSWERED THAT IN THIS ISSUE THE GOVERNMENT CAME TO A DECISION AND THE MEANING OF THE DECISION IS THAT EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT. SO IT COULD BE THAT I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND UNDERSTAND YOUR QUESTION. BUT MY ANSWER YOU CAN'T
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MISUNDERSTAND.

54. (END UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION FROM HEBREW).

55. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

56. END PRESS REMARKS.

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Review Release Date: N/A
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